

Scott Pelath

Indiana State Representative, District 9



Summer, 2001

Dear Friends:

The 2001 long session of the Indiana General Assembly has ended with the passage of a new state budget and several other important pieces of legislation. I am pleased we completed our work on time in a bipartisan manner.

The new two-year state budget includes increased funding for education, CHOICE and other important programs while avoiding a general tax increase. The budget also includes funding for several important local projects that are detailed inside this newsletter.

We passed several other laws that will benefit our state in a variety of areas, including health care, education, crime, election reform and environmental protection. We made improvements to our license branch operations and passed legislation that will protect consumers from annoying telephone calls with the establishment of a do-not-call list. I have described many of these new laws in the next few pages.

In addition, you will find a map of our new legislative district. We are required to redraw the district boundaries every 10 years due to population shifts. I welcome those of you who are new to the district and look forward to working with you in the coming months to make Indiana a better place to live.

Please contact my office if you have additional concerns or questions about state government. You may e-mail me at H9@ai.org or call toll-free at 1-800-382-9842.

Sincerely,

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New budget increases school support, local development

Going into the 2001 legislative session, many observers felt that a sluggish economy would make it difficult to enact a biennial state budget without either passing a general tax increase or cutting funding for critical areas like public education. However, the budget bill that became law continues our record of avoiding general tax increases, while providing additional state support to our schools, health care and local projects.

The final version of House Enrolled Act 1001 enables the state to increase support for public schools across Indiana by an average of 3.5 percent each of the next two fiscal years, with minimum guarantees built in to help schools avoid cutting programs and personnel. Funding for higher education was increased by an average of 3.2 percent each year.

Services and local development

The budget includes additional funding for the CHOICE program that provides in-home care services for the elderly and disabled, as well as Build Indiana Fund support for research and technology, community wastewater and drinking water grants, airport development and improvements to voting systems.

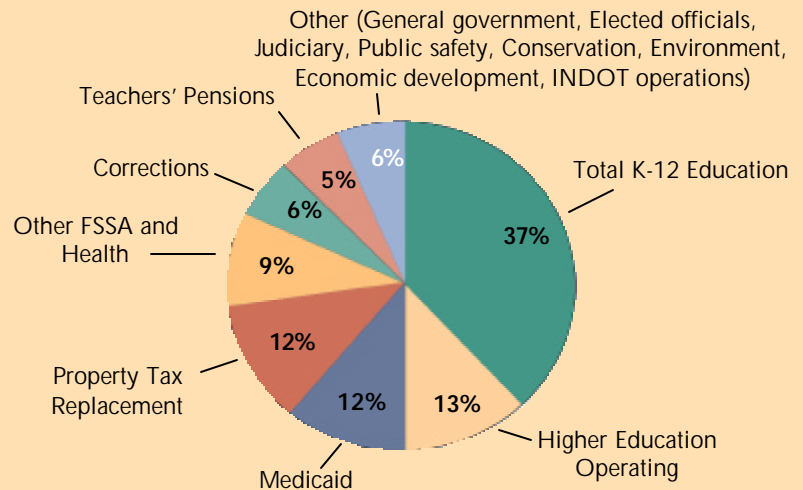
Tax relief

It was disappointing that we were unable to provide the levels of tax relief that were included in past state budgets, but I am pleased that we were able to extend the life of the homestead credit at 10 percent and maintain the earned income tax credit that assists working families on lower incomes.

Businesses and farms will receive an income tax credit on personal property beginning in 2003, and mobile homes have been changed to be treated as real property with similar deductions. The budget bill continues to fund a statewide property tax relief program that now takes about 16 percent off all property taxes. When coupled with the 10 percent homestead credit, that translates to savings of around 26 percent.

A bill the size of the budget does not contain everything I would like, but considering the fiscal restraints facing legislators going into the 2001 session, I feel this budget is a major accomplishment.

Spending highlights from the 2001-2003 budget



Health insurance reform focus of Pelath legislation

In the 2001 legislative session, my colleagues and I were able to build on the reforms passed in recent years that grant patients a stronger voice in decisions affecting their health care.

In addition to my work on the Public Health Committee and the Insurance, Corporations and Small Business Committee, I was able to sponsor the following three laws. Senate Enrolled Act 365 **gives patients a chance to appeal care decisions for all accident and sickness insurance coverage to an outside panel of medical professionals**. Senate Enrolled Act 310 requires insurers and providers to use **easily understandable language** to describe procedures and diseases, and Senate Enrolled Act 311 requires insurance companies to pay so-called **clean claims** – those that are properly submitted and contain all needed information – **in a timely fashion**. If the insurance companies do not pay on time, they will be charged interest and financial penalties.

Other health care related bills call for supplying provider profiles to the general public (HEA 1770), allowing the state to help health care professionals pay their student loans in an effort to keep them in the state (SEA 533) and setting the maximum age for an abandoned infant who may be left in the care of an emergency medical service provider without a court order from 30 to 45 days (HEA 1829).

Finally, disabled Hoosiers will be able to make substantial strides toward achieving self-sufficiency and preserving health care coverage through HEA 1950, which establishes a statewide buy-in program that would assure Medicaid coverage for workers with disabilities.





Charter schools and teen curfew law

After several years of debate, legislators finally agreed to pass a bill that will allow charter schools in the state of Indiana. These are independent schools that are able to design their own curriculums and control their own spending without worrying about state authority.

Under Senate Enrolled Act 165, three groups have the ability to sponsor charter schools: local school boards, Indiana's public universities and the mayor of Indianapolis. Those entities will be required to set up their own criteria for establishing the schools, and advocates are hopeful that sponsors can begin accepting applications from interested parties before the end of this year.



REP. PELATH CONFERS WITH SPEAKER JOHN GREGG (D - SANDBORN).

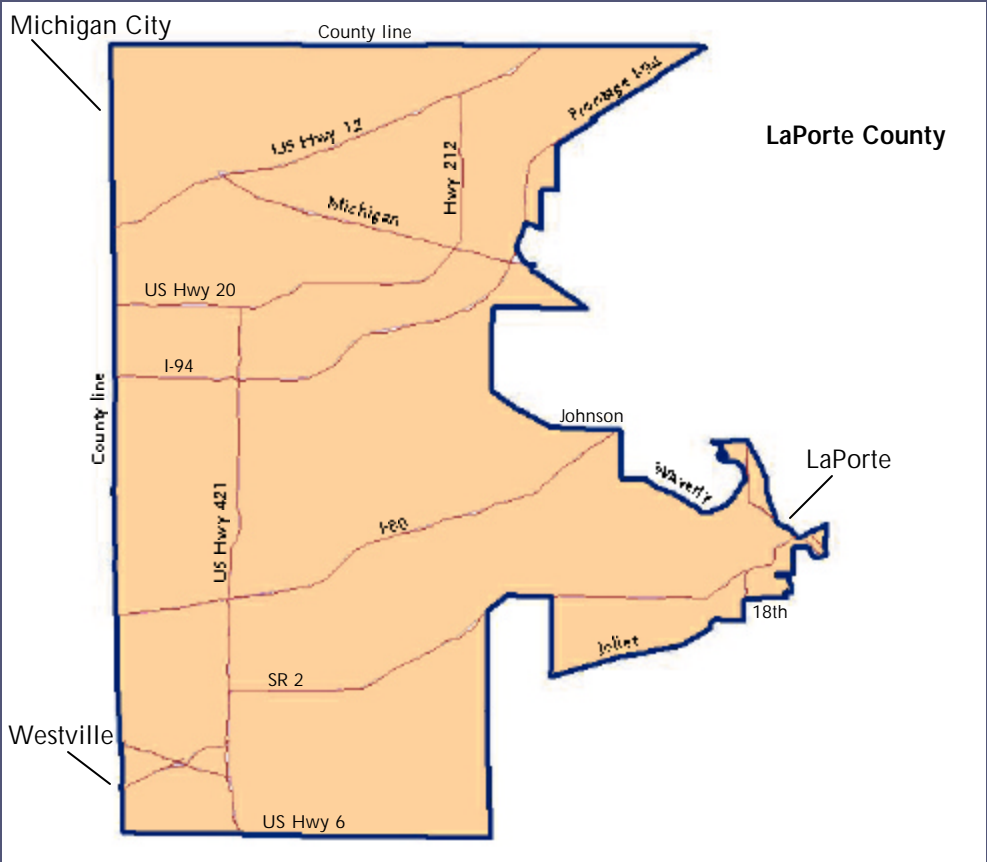
Curfew law

Indiana's curfew law for juveniles was ruled unconstitutional last year, but House Enrolled Act 1084 makes changes in the law to conform with recent cases. These changes enable youths to stay out past the curfew if they are engaged in certain activities protected by federal and state laws, including school and religious functions.

Build Indiana Funds go to District 9

City Neighborhoods Alive and Trail Creek Harbor projects Michigan City	\$250,000
Town of Westville	\$25,000
LaPorte Co. Sheriff Department equipment purchases	\$50,000
Michigan City Salvation Army	\$50,000
Michigan City YMCA	\$50,000
Michiana Resources, Inc.	\$10,000
Barker Middle School Outdoor Nature Preserve	\$10,000
Neutral Zone Teen Center	\$10,000
LaPorte Co. Parks Department	\$10,000
LaPorte Co. Fairgrounds	\$10,000
LaPorte Co. YMCA	\$25,000

The new look of District 9



During this year's session, you may have heard about redistricting in the news. After each census, the Indiana General Assembly is required by law to redraw House, Senate and Congressional district boundaries according to population changes.

Each district must have 60,000 people, which means that as the population moves to or from various parts of the state, boundaries shift to reflect that change. District boundaries are very complicated, and it took months of effort and plenty of debate among legislators. In the end, however, I feel that the district lines we have drawn are as fair as possible.

I look forward to serving those of you who are new to our district. Please contact me if you have questions about the district or any other matters.



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U.S. Postage
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Privacy from telemarketers and election reform

Stay informed about these
and other issues online with
Representative Pelath



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As a member of the Commerce, Economic Development and Technology Committee, I was pleased to recommend the passage of a bill to prevent the interruption of telemarketers calling you at home. Through House Enrolled Act 1222, you will be able to have your name placed on a "do not call" list that will **prohibit most solicitors from contacting you via the telephone**. To be placed on the list, contact the Office of the Indiana Attorney General about the **Telephone Privacy List** at 1-888-834-9969.

In the wake of the confusion that took place in the presidential election in Florida last fall, lawmakers in Indiana moved quickly to enact reforms that will change the way we handle elections here.

Senate Enrolled Act 268 gives counties the ability to enter

into agreements with the state to purchase **upgraded voting equipment**. This allows counties to take advantage of the state's ability to purchase large amounts of equipment and materials at discounted prices. Funds contained in the biennial state budget will help the state provide 50 percent matching grants to further reduce those costs. The same legislation also **eliminates the use of punch-card voting** in future elections.

Through provisions contained in House Enrolled Act 1510, the state has moved closer to improving voter registration in Indiana. The Indiana Election Division will make a **voter registration form available on the Internet** that people can download, fill out and mail in to be processed. The legislation also strives to update lists of eligible voters by removing names of people who are deceased and convicted felons who are in prison.